5 Reasons Why Hepatitis Awareness Month Needs You

May 6, 2019 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

Hepatitis Awareness month is here, and I have a litany of excuses for why I don't need to participate. These excuses include:

- It's spring and I have been cooped up all winter, and now I want to work in the garden.
- I've put in my time; let someone else do it.
- Hepatitis Awareness Month doesn't need me.
- I'm unrealistic if I think I can make a difference.
- I'm too busy with other obligations.

Red Flags

I fear complacency, particularly when it comes from me. These excuses are huge red flags, because if I don't get involved, who will?

As for the need for Hepatitis Awareness Month, it is just as great now as it was when it was first established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 2001.

Here are 5 reasons why we need Hepatitis Awareness Month and why we all need to be involved:

1. The number of new cases of viral hepatitis is growing. Hepatitis A is steadily increasing with widespread outbreaks across the United States. Although the prevalence of hepatitis B isn't increasing, it isn't showing signs of going away. Reported cases of acute hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection increased about 3.5-fold from 2010 through 2016.
2. Viral hepatitis is a killer. People with hepatitis C are dying at record-high rates. These deaths occur primarily among adults aged 55–64 years. This rate of premature death is a tragedy, particularly in view of the fact that hep C is a curable disease. According to the CDC, "In 2013, HCV-related deaths, as recorded on death certificates, exceeded the combined number of deaths of 60 other infectious diseases as underlying or contributing causes. The overall hepatitis C-related mortality rate remained steady from 2012 through 2014 (My note: this rate slightly declined in 2015 and 2016.) However, some evidence suggests that deaths in HCV-infected persons may have been under enumerated; the only large U.S. study of deaths among persons with confirmed HCV infection indicated that only 19 percent had HCV listed anywhere on the death certificate despite 75 percent having evidence of substantial liver disease."

3. Hepatitis B and C don’t just kill, they maim. Both can cause liver damage, cancer and liver failure. Hepatitis C is associated with many other serious medical conditions, such as heart disease, stroke, depression, kidney problems, skin diseases, lymphoma,, and so on.
4. Hepatitis C is curable. Hepatitis B is treatable. Vaccines can prevent hepatitis A and B. Prevention, treatment and cure all amount to saving lives.
5. Our efforts affect our community and our world. Help to prevent, treat or cure one person and you may stop the further spread of viral hepatitis, at least by that one person who you reached.

To find out what you can do to help, follow these links to the CDC’s Hepatitis Awareness Month and Know More Hepatitis pages. And after you get involved, perhaps keep up the effort during the 11 remaining months of the year.

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http://beta.docker.hepmag.com/blog/5-reasons-hepatitis-awareness-month-needs